



Tiny homes, big impact | Page 8

# NOTL remembers soldiers' sacrifices

## Museum's massive Poppy Project expands to RiverBrink Art Museum



Hilary Bellis and Liz Klose help set up the poppy display at the NOTL Museum on Monday. It's one of four Remembrance Day locations this year. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

### Remembrance Day ceremonies

Read about what's happening in town for Remembrance Day. **Page 15**

### Poppy Project decorates town

Volunteers meticulously create and plan the NOTL Museum's massive Poppy Project. **Page 3**

### In Flanders Fields

Read the iconic poem by John McCrae alongside Remembrance notes from local businesses. **Page 15**

## Library asks town for \$66,000 to cover budget shortage

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The NOTL Public Library is asking for the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to cover around 81 per cent of

its \$81,000 shortage for its budget next year.

Wayne Scott, the library board co-chair, said he would support council raising resident taxes to get these funds.

In a message to The

Lake Report, Coun. Erwin Wiens explained that every \$161,000 increases the town's budget by about one per cent.

The increase the library asked for would require around a half-per cent bump

to property taxes, he said.

The Lake Report later confirmed that the requested amount of just under \$66,000 would require even less of an increase than Wiens estimated.

Scott confirmed in an

email to The Lake Report that the request the library demanded is a 7.4 per cent increase in the library grant from this year which would be about a \$5 increase in library funding for the average taxpayer.

"We are comfortable with 4.5 per cent of the town levy going to the library — which is only about one per cent of the average total tax bill," Scott said.

*Continued on Page 2*

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# Co-chair says he's fine with raising taxes

Continued from Front Page

“The library board is comfortable asking for an average \$5 increase from each household because of the value we believe that the library creates for the NOTL community.”

The evidence for this is clear with a significant increase in resident participation in library programming and a higher increase in new library members than the average population growth, Scott said.

“This is a story of the library responding to community demand, not the library trying to impose its programs and services on the community,” he said.

Wiens posed the question to presenters after a community partners budget presentation from Scott and interim CEO Laura Tait, given during Oct. 22’s committee of the whole meeting.

“I say that, knowing that you might call on me to back up this statement and I will be here in a heartbeat,” Scott said during his presentation.

The library provides essential services to the community, including ad-



Wayne Scott.

dressing loneliness, early childhood education and family togetherness, he said.

“I feel the value the library adds to the community,” Scott said.

The presentation also mentioned that according to the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, 96 per cent of public library funding comes from municipalities. In the Niagara Region, the average municipal funding is 90.9 per cent.

Wiens said Scott’s response was what he was looking for and what he can relay to residents.

The overall increase in expenses for the library in 2025 sits at \$81,334, with the library itself covering 19 per cent of this amount and leaving the rest to the municipality.

“This request reflects our

commitment to maintaining the new levels of service we’ve achieved this year, while effectively managing costs,” Tait said during the presentation.

In 2025, the library will need \$58,500 to cover collection needs, but the library’s development charge reserve is now in a deficit, Tait said.

“We will use funds from our library’s donation reserve to fund the digital collection and funds from the library development reserve to fund part of the print collection,” she said.

The other 50 per cent is being requested from council.

This is a temporary fix, Tait said, with reserve funds expected to be significantly impacted by the end of next year.

Reserve funds are expected to have around \$36,000 across them all, Tait said.

“Historically, we have been able to fund 90 per cent of our collection from (development charges),” she said.

“Before 2019, our average revenue from developers was around \$95,000 annually, for the past six years we have been revving an

average of around \$17,000 annually.”

In 2021, Tait added, council had a chance to fix this with an operating budget surplus of \$75,000 due to COVID-19 cuts.

“Council chose to retain the surplus rather than transfer it,” she said.

Like council, the library is working to have a more sustainable long-term financing situation, Scott said.

“I’m personally committed to working with our CEO and our director of finance so that next year, at this point, we aren’t back with the same story.”

He is not sure how it will be done, but he is committed because it is essential, he said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said that the library’s request is on par with the level of service they provide the community.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the library’s presentation aligns well with council’s strategic plan.

An increase in staff wages and transfer of money to library reserves are two driving points for him, Zalepa said.

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## Poppy Project gets it done, rain or shine

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After a slight delay due to windy conditions, the fourth iteration of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's Poppy Project was fully installed Monday morning.

Displays at Legion Branch 124 and RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston were installed before high winds postponed the museum and the old Court House's installations.

On Monday morning, project volunteers were out and ready to assemble displays alongside help from Davey Expert Tree Company.

Rain was expected to start shortly after the museum's installation began, but it didn't stop the dedicated team of poppy makers from getting the job done, ahead of Remembrance Day on Monday, Nov. 11.

"Even when it's bad weather, we remember that all those boys in the trenches dealt with so much," said Barbara Worthy, the museum's community engagement coordinator.

"When we're putting it up and we're cold and we're wet, we're doing it in the spirit of remembrance."

In its fourth year now, the Poppy Project has more



Volunteers help set up the poppy display at the Court House. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

than 7,000 poppies attached to 18 nets, each more than 14 feet long.

Worthy thanked Davey Expert Tree Company for volunteering its efforts to help hang up the massive nets.

"We couldn't do this without them. This is thousands of dollars of love labour," she said.

Arborists with the company also cut down extra dead branches off of a tree outside the museum to ensure the safety of volunteers.

Denise Ascenzo, a member of the Niagara Historical Society, has been helping out with the

poppy project for all four years.

"It's an honour to be able to show respect for the men and the women who went ahead of us to fight for the peace we have here in Canada," she said.

Ascenzo helps out with poppy and net-making alongside other volunteers.

"We make sure that after (the displays) are done we dry them before we wrap them in sheets and tuck them away for next year," she said.

With many poppies and nets to make by hand, the poppy brigade is always looking for more volun-

teers— and have had a wave of new members this year, she said.

This year marked Diane Fovargue's first year of helping out with the poppy project.

She volunteered to help make poppies after hearing about the project from one of her friends in the brigade, she said.

"So in the evening, watching television— I made poppies," Fovargue said.

The poppy project is always looking for more volunteers for the coming years, especially younger people, Ascenzo said.

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## Top candidate for NOTL CAO doesn't pan out

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Efforts to find a new chief administrator for the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake have hit a snag, leaving the possibility of being unable to fill the role permanently by the end of the year.

After failing to secure the top candidate out of approximately 70 people who applied, the town's selection committee is being forced to renew its efforts.

"We had one that we were pleased with but we weren't able to make terms with them, which is disappointing," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa who, along with councillors Erwin Wiens, Sandra O'Connor and Maria Mavridis, made up the town's hiring team.

Bruce Zvaniga is currently serving as the interim CAO. He replaced Marnie Cluckie last December and made it clear he would not take the job on permanently.

Cluckie left to become Hamilton's city manager.



Bruce Zvaniga, the town's acting chief administrator, will also be on the search committee for his long-term replacement. FILE

Recruitment efforts for that permanent replacement began in earnest earlier this year and hit a near-end point early last month with the identification of a group of top candidates.

The town hired Phelps Group, a Toronto executive search firm, to help identify those qualified individuals.

With this new setback, it is doubtful Zvaniga's replacement can now be found before Jan. 1 — the date Zalepa said was his goal.

"We were hoping to have this wrapped up for this year. I don't suspect that's

going to be possible," he said.

In an Oct. 30 press release, the town announced that Zvaniga has agreed to remain in his acting role until a permanent CAO can be found.

Zalepa is pleased the veteran municipal civil servant has agreed to remain at the post.

Zvaniga, who has over 40 years of municipal administration experience, has been commissioner of public works for Niagara Region and Brampton, and spent 27 years working for the City of Toronto.

"It is so vitally important to have somebody like that, with not only the expertise and the experience from his past, but the commitment to the community," said Zalepa.

The lord mayor added that he understands Zvaniga's desire to call it a day on his career and hopes a suitable replacement can be found soon.

"We know that our interim CAO is at a point in his

career where he's looking to take more personal time," he said.

"But we really value his ability and how he's done things. The community is really lucky to have somebody like that."

Zalepa is confident that with the continued help of Phelps Group another top candidate will be found.

"We are definitely ahead in the process because the work we put in with the consultants to identify for council the right skill set. That kind of thing is all done," he said.

"We just really have to recast and hopefully we get some interviews going and get back to where we were a lot quicker than the first time."

Zvaniga declined to comment on the matter.

The town's communications department said he "is open to providing an interview once the new CAO has been appointed and a transition plan is in place for his departure."

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# Parliament Oak engineering reports under scrutiny

## Two retired NOTL engineers find flaws with groundwater plan. Mayor isn't interested

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Criticisms about the Parliament Oak hotel development won't go away.

The latest are aimed at engineering reports town staff used to have council approve a zoning amendment in June that paved the way to start construction on the proposed four-storey luxury hotel on King Street.

Prepared by the engineering firm R.V. Anderson Associates Ltd. and paid for by the developer, Two Sister Resorts Corp., both the site servicing and stormwater management report and a traffic impact study open with statements relieving itself of liability.

"Any use which a third party makes of this report, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of such third parties," states both reports.

"R.V. Anderson Associates Limited accepts no responsibility for damages, if any, suffered by any third party as a result of decisions made or actions based on this report."

A pair of engineering experts living in NOTL believe this reduces both reports' worthiness.

"When the town staff say, 'We read the report and we're satisfied with it,' then the R.V. Anderson people say, 'Thank you, now it's your problem,'" said Ron Simkus, a retired mining engineer with 40 years in the field.

"You would expect that (town staff) would challenge the developers."

Kirsten McCauley, the town's director of community and development services, said she and town staff reviewed the R.V. Anderson reports before bringing their recommendation to council and had no issues with the transfer of liability.

"I don't have any concern about the disclaimer," she said.

"In this case, we worked with our operations staff, and they reviewed the information and they provided their feedback and the recommendation back to us."

Beyond this disclaimer, Simkus and Richard Connelly, a retired civil and municipal engineer who is still a registered engineer in Ontario, found what they say are several issues with the reports.

This includes a lack of information on the state of receiving infrastructure for sanitary sewers, no information on the reserve capacity of the sewage treatment system, no allowances for climate change and runoff/drainage capabilities after intense rainfalls and no mention of a storm management facility to match pre and post-development rain flows.

This, the engineers claim, is a recipe for a flooding disaster in a community already suffering from aging infrastructure and documented surface and groundwater issues.

While Simkus is no longer a registered engineer, his knowledge about the damage water can do is documented by his years of experience.

"As a person in mining, rock isn't your biggest issue — water is," he noted.

On the parking and traffic side of things, the pair are equally dismayed.

Connelly said the report's estimated parking spaces of 248 is much lower than a five-star hotel would need and still way too much for what the property and neighbourhood can handle.

He adds that with 129 hotel rooms as planned, an estimated 300-plus employees coming in from all points of the region for work and with the hotel's proposed convention facilities bringing in even more vehicles, the result will be a traffic nightmare.

"You start looking at traffic impact, but then you start looking at that parking



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says he isn't interested in the opinions of residents who are qualified engineers when it comes to the controversial Parliament Oak hotel development. Those engineers have found several problems with an engineering report the town relied on to rezone the property, including an unusual disclaimer waiving liability.

impact, and it's impossible. It won't fit," said Connelly.

**“We will get the questions answered, but we’ll be dealing with actively employed, qualified engineers that will be responsible for the municipality.”**

LORD MAYOR GARY ZALEPA

The process by which these reports are reviewed by operations staff does not include a professional engineer who works for the municipality.

"The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake does not employ an in-house professional engineer," said communication co-ordinator Marah Minor in a written response.

"The town, like many other small municipalities, uses outside engineering firms when required," she added.

The requirement to seek a third-party engineering

report will come later in the site plan approval process, said McCauley.

"That will either be the one that we typically use, which is Associated Engineering, or another engineering firm that is selected by the town," she said.

A similar peer review process is followed by the cities of Toronto and Hamilton.

Simkus hopes the plan is to go with a firm that has no past contracts with the town.

"(Any firm contracted to review the reports) has to be totally independent of both current contracts of the town and with the developer and would provide an absolutely independent assessment of the project itself," he said.

Relying on the R.V. Anderson reports has created a liability shift that Connelly doesn't think council fully understands or is even aware of.

"If they don't get their act together and bring in a group of professional engineers that can do a proper report with their interests, they're going to be in deep shit."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa doesn't put much weight on the opinions of Connelly and Simkus.

"I'm not interested in that," he said.

"We will get the questions answered, but we'll be dealing with actively employed, qualified engineers that will be responsible for the municipality."

Zalepa added he had not seen the reports.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor has seen the reports and is very concerned about their contents.

She voted against the zoning amendment in June.

She has now gone as far as to request that town staff bring the site plan to council for review prior to its approval.

This is something that is no longer normal practice.

With the passing of the province's Bill 109 More Homes for Everyone Act in April 2022, site plans can now be delegated to municipal staff for approval before they reach council.

O'Connor, however, has made a special request to have the site plan reviewed

by council before staff approval due to concerns she has and those of members of the public such as expressed by Simkus and Connelly.

"This is the first one we have done it for because it is so important," she said.

"In most cases, it's not a concern, but in some cases, particularly if it's a major development, we would like to see those details."

For Simkus and Connelly, the pair say they are speaking out because of their love for the community and a commitment to upholding the values of the engineering profession.

"Engineers have an oath that they take when you get these iron rings," said Simkus, lifting his hand to show the simple metal band given to all engineers upon university graduation.

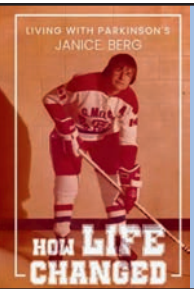
"And that oath is to not just stand back and watch this parade go by," he added.

"If you feel compulsion to say something, you have an obligation that we took when we graduated from school."

[wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)



**In the Spotlight: Local author Janice Berg**  
Janice Berg is the author of three wonderful books, all available on Amazon. She lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake in assisted living, and spends her summers up north in Huntsville. Her companion Dan encourages her to put her stories on paper. We hope you enjoy them!  
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# Dining for a difference

Guests enjoyed a delicious meal, sharing laughter and conversation during the Simply DiVine Fundraiser at Ravine, hosted by the May Court Club of St. Catharines. The group focuses on “the needs of our community, primarily those of women and children,” and has focused its efforts on family nutrition, children with disabilities, and at-risk and homeless youth. The St. Catharines chapter is one of nine clubs that make up the Association of May Court Clubs of Canada.



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# Region seeks ideas for St. Davids roundabout design

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

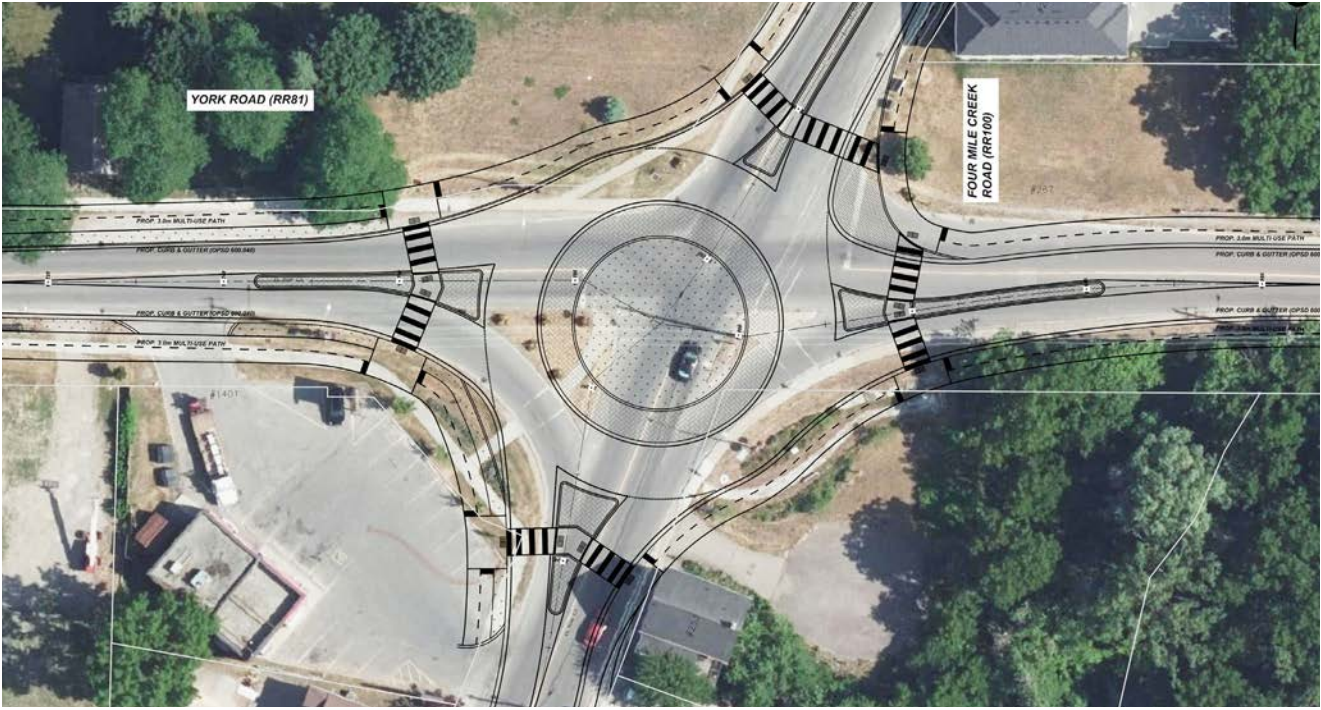
The Niagara Region will hold a public engagement workshop on Nov. 13 to hear design opinions for a controversial roundabout planned for the intersection of York and Four Mile Creek roads in St. Davids.

The workshop will use the feedback and incorporate ideas to formulate designs that reflect the public’s visual desires, says Frank Tasone, the region’s director of transportation services.

“Most specifically, to get the community involved in the potential landscape,” he said, adding that feedback will also be sought for an additional beautifying project on the west end of the community near the Queenston and York roads intersection.

The meeting will separate attendees into working groups in which they can brainstorm and offer thoughts on beautification and designs that best reflect the St. Davids village.

“We’re going to have the working groups discussing things like the character of



The intersection of York and Four Mile Creek roads in St. Davids will eventually be converted into a roundabout. It’s a costly project that has been met with considerable public backlash from residents across NOTL. SUBMITTED PHOTO

the area and some histories. We want to hear some stories and things that are meaningful for the community.”

The meeting is not about whether or not the roundabout will be built, says NOTL regional councillor Andrea Kaiser — and it is important for its attendees to understand this, she said. “That is not what this is

about,” she said, noting plans are a go for the contentious piece of infrastructure.

A petition against the project started by the St. Davids Ratepayers Association a little more than a year ago has accumulated 855 signatures as of Nov. 5.

“The purpose roundabouts provide is the opposite of what’s needed in our village centre,” it states.

“We need traffic to slow down and to stop. We need children and elders, including those with visual impairment and other needs, along with the tourists we so happily welcome, to cross safely.”

Other concerns highlighted by the association include the cost and how the surrounding parcel of land the roundabout will cover is

better served to house business opportunities.

“In terms of budget ... \$895,000 has been allocated for the environmental assessment and detailed design,” communications consultant Janet Rose told The Lake Report.

“But the construction budget estimates are still being refined, so we don’t have details on that to share

at this time,” she added.

Proponents of the intersection’s transition include Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who sits on the regional council as one of 12 Niagara mayors with 19 other elected representatives from Niagara municipalities.

“The environmental study indicates that the roundabout actually fits better into the space than the signalized intersection does,” he said, adding that he has attended every open house and read the detailed reports.

Zalepa also believes that circular and free-flowing design will make the intersection safer.

“There is never a head-to-head collision,” he said. “If (accidents) happen they are kind of just grazes and bumps.”

The proposed single-lane roundabout will fit vehicles up to a standard tractor-trailer with a six-metre-wide road and a three-metre-wide truck apron.

The meeting will be at White Oaks Resort and Spa at 253 Taylor Rd. in NOTL from 5 to 7 p.m.

[wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)

# ALUS

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# Cenotaph will be ready for Nov. 11

The scaffolding was removed from the clock tower cenotaph on Queen Street on Monday, just in time for the Remembrance Day ceremony on Monday. The \$80,500 repairs to the cenotaph involved brickwork repointing, parging, clock face restoration and interior renovations. The Remembrance Day ceremony will take place at 10:45 a.m. All are welcome.

## ST. MARK'S CEMETERY DEDICATION CEREMONY OF NEW MAJOR GEARY MONUMENT ON SUNDAY NOV. 10, 2024 @ 10 A.M.

The dedication of a new stone monument to honour Major Benjamin Geary, a Victoria Cross recipient will take place on Sunday November 10, 2024. Major Geary was recognized for his heroism at Hill 60 Ypres Belgium.

Please gather at the entrance to St. Mark's Church located at 41 Byron Street at 10 a.m. The dedication ceremony will start at 10:15 a.m. sharp.

A Remembrance Day church service will follow at 10:30 a.m.

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# Tiny homes can save the family unit and make communities closer, says builder

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Amanda Colvin has experienced firsthand what it is like to watch an elderly family member suffer from isolation and loneliness.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake home builder, along with her husband, Scott Colvin, has moved into the tiny home business, which they see as an opportunity to help ease the housing crunch and keep families and friends close to loved ones, while creating a gentle density that benefits everyone in the neighbourhood.

“My grandmother grew up in Thornhill and once her kids grew up and moved away, she was fairly isolated there, especially since a lot of her community of people started to age and pass away,” said Colvin, who started Buot Tiny Homes with her husband this past spring.

“She was living independently, and perfectly capable of doing that, but because of the social isolation, she was struggling to sort of find that continued desire to get up in the morning and start her day.”

A solution, Colvin believes, could have been for her father to move her grandmother into a tiny home or accessory dwelling unit on his property in Mississauga — if he had one.

Instead, her grandmother moved into a condo unit in Mississauga, which Colvin said wasn’t much different from living in another community — it still meant having to travel between family locations.

“She went through some mental health challenges,” said Colvin.

Now that the Ontario government has eased the rules and regulations around accessory dwelling units — also known as tiny houses, coach homes, granny flats or garden suites — the options for families who want to remain closer, or for residents who want to make additional income, have been expanded.



Amanda and Scott Colvin build tiny homes that they hope will help people stay close with family and subsidize the cost of living. Here they showcase one of their builds, a 300-square-foot home that comes complete with a kitchen, bathroom, living room and bed. RICHARD WRIGHT

As of June 1 this year, Bill 23, the province’s More Homes Built Faster Act, came into full effect, creating a process for landowners to double original allowances from one to two units of living space on their properties.

The new rules also feature exemptions from development charges.

The Colvins believe their tiny home model is perfect for communities like Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“There’s definitely interest,” said Amanda Colvin.

“I’ve had some conversations with members of council in Niagara-on-the-Lake who have expressed excitement and interest in having more of this kind of sort of micro-development happening in the community to support people who

need to live here, to work here and who can’t afford over a million dollars for a home.”

Coun. Maria Mavridis is one of those councillors and sees a need for this kind of moderate increase in density. She welcomes the new provincial rules.

“I have a friend and her parents want to sell their house and kind of live with her, but, you know, not live with her,” said Mavridis.

“This would be a great alternative.”

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, as in many communities, another demographic struggling with high housing costs is young people, or anyone just starting out on their own, said Mavridis.

“For the younger generation, it’s just getting tougher and tougher to purchase

their own home,” she added. “I think that is a great alternative for that, too.”

Accessory dwellings also open up income streams for homeowners who want to create rental units to offset the cost of their mortgages, those in favour of them say.

Speaking of mortgages, the federal government announced new measures this month intending to make this process easier.

On Oct. 8, federal Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that as of Jan. 15 next year, the government will allow mortgage insurance for Canadians who intend to construct additional units for use in long-term rental opportunities.

Borrowers will now be able to finance up to 90 per cent of their home value,

including the value added by the additional units, and pay the mortgage over 30 years.

“This is a way that community members can have another income stream off of their property, and continue to live in the community they love ... without damaging the overall aesthetic and appeal of this historical place,” said Colvin.

The Colvins believe their modular homes fit that bill perfectly.

Modern and including all amenities and services no matter the unit’s size, the structures range from super small bachelor-style homes to units with one or more bedrooms.

The units are constructed in sections, each section like a block of Lego. The more living space you want,

the more blocks you put down.

Without basements, and water and sewage hookups that tie directly into the main home, they are environmentally friendly when it comes to construction.

“One of the great things we can do with this is we can plot these where there are trees,” said Scott Colvin. “We don’t have to clear-cut.”

As for the price points, the smallest unit, at 92 square feet of interior living space, starts in the \$55,000 range.

As for the upper limits, the company lists a 545-square-foot unit at \$260,000.

“But there are no upper limits,” said Amanda Colvin. “You can build them together endlessly.”

[wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)



## THE NOTL POPPY PROJECT

Outdoor installations of knitted, crocheted and fabric poppies at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum (43 Castlereagh St.), the Niagara District Courthouse (26 Queen St.), and Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 (410 King St.), RiverBrink Art Museum (1116 Queenston St., Queenston)



# Fundraiser aims to help abandoned pets

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake family's Christmas fundraiser for animal welfare is set for Nov. 23 and 30.

The multi-day flower sale, bake sale and pet food drive will support the Niagara Spay Neuter Assistance Program and REBEL Dog Rescue.

The fundraiser is timely, taking place just a month after three kittens were found abandoned in NOTL.

The whole situation raises awareness of animal cruelty and the importance of having pets fixed, says fundraiser organizer Tanya Rice, who will host the event at her family home with her husband Peter.

"We always stress to people to spay, neuter and microchip (their pets)," Rice told The Lake Report.

"Unfortunately, since the COVID pandemic, dumping of animals has become a pandemic internationally."



Fundraiser organizer and animal advocate Tanya Rice with Pheobe, a cat she recently fostered. SUPPLIED

Factors such as reduced hours for spay and neuter clinics during the pandemic, high costs of living, and pandemic pets have contributed to the surge in unwanted animals, Rice said.

"With the pandemic, we had kids being home-schooled, parents were home ... working online, and a lot of families went out and got pets or added an extra pet to their home," she said.

"Veterinarians also had reduced hours, so, to get

your animal in for spay or neutering, it was difficult."

Add food insecurity to the list and you have compounded the animal abandonment problem, she added.

"Not only are families struggling to put food on the tables for themselves, but the cost of keeping a pet — pet food, litter and veterinarian bills — it all has increased in the last four years as well. So we're seeing more and more strays."

The fundraiser will be held at Rice's home at 456

Line 2 Rd. from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day.

Christmas porch planters, fresh wreaths, holiday baking, jams, red pepper jelly and pickles will be available for purchase with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to the Niagara Spay Neuter Assistance Program and REBEL Dog Rescue.

Coconut Quartz, a NOTL home-based operation specializing in handcrafted gemstone and stone bead accessories, will be on-site selling the custom "we love pets" bracelets.

A portion of the proceeds from those sales will be donated to the cause.

"In addition, we'll be hosting a food drive for rescue groups," said a press Nov. 1 press release

"Canned cat and dog food (kitten & puppy), kibble and cat litter (new litter boxes) are always a necessity and greatly appreciated."

For more information or to make a donation contact fundraising4animalrescue@gmail.com.

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“Midnight Ramblers” by Andrew Interisano was highly commended under the urban wildlife category of the Natural History Museum’s Photographer of the Year awards. The photo was taken in spring of 2021. SUPPLIED

# Photographer earns national honour for photograph of NOTL coyotes

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

When Andrew Interisano set out to photograph some of NOTL’s infamous skunks, he didn’t know he’d be taking a internationally award-winning shot of another creature.

Interisano, 33, moved into his parent’s house during the COVID-19 pandemic, where he began to familiarize himself with the nature and animals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

During the spring of 2021, he set out to photograph some of the skunks lingering around his NOTL neighbourhood in Old Town, spending every other night for about a week in search of the perfect shot.

A shot resulting from one of the outings, featuring two coyotes, is one of a handful of photographs to receive the “Highly Commended” accolade in the international Wildlife Photographer of the Year contest this year.

Awarded in the category of urban wildlife, Interisano’s photograph “Midnight Ramblers” will be displayed alongside 100 photographs, taken all over the world, in an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, running from Dec. 21 to May 4.

Interisano had no intention of capturing the coyotes that night, but when out at night between 10 p.m. and midnight, he got lucky.

“I didn’t see them at first — I didn’t recognize



Andrew Interisano.

what they were, but I’d seen something cut across the road coming from Butler’s Barracks,” he said.

In his car, Interisano turned the corner and found the two coyotes in the middle of the road, he said. “I poked my head out of the window with my camera. It was a pretty magical moment.”

After the adrenaline rush calmed down, Interisano realized the coyotes had stopped in the road because another group of them were howling somewhere in the near distance.

“It was kind of this eerie, magical moment that happened. I put my camera down and watched them listen, then they were off and away,” he said.

When he submitted the photo to be judged, Interisano included a story describing the conflict between wildlife and residents.

Coyotes have been spotted roaming neighbourhoods in NOTL, primarily in the spring following the mating season, with a few reported incidents of coyotes chasing pet dogs.

Their presence among

humans has been attributed to factors such as people directly feeding them, unattended garbage and unsealed trash cans becoming foraging sites for food and development disrupting their natural habitats.

The dark and light sides of the image symbolize the balance between animal and human in NOTL, Interisano said.

“This is such a beautiful moment, but there is sort of a dark side that’s happening, there’s conflict with humans and we have to address it in a thoughtful way that also speaks to conservation,” he said.

Interisano told a story of when his brother was walking his small dog in Butler’s Barracks and encountered a coyote.

“For him it was a traumatic experience, but for me, there’s a split emotion,” Interisano said.

“Of course, I have empathy for my brother and his dog. God forbid something worse didn’t happen. At the same time, the coyote is just doing what it’s born to do — to survive.”

Interisano said there are things people can learn to prevent coyote attacks — for example, taking extra precautions during the springtime when coyote puppies are born.

A hobby photographer, Interisano had always been interested in wildlife, he said.

“I really didn’t pick up my first camera until 2018.”

But around 2021, after getting lots of positive feedback on his work, Interisano decided to upgrade his camera gear and get more involved in the art form.

“It’s all taken off from there,” he said.

With the same coyote photo, Interisano has taken home the overall win for an urban wildlife photography award from Picfair.

“I’ve won a couple of smaller contests with Tourism Saksatchewan, I won the wildlife award with a bison photo,” Interisano said.

He’s also featured in a new book, titled “Accidentally Wes Anderson Adventures” including an image taken of the Kinsmen Scout Hall in Old Town.

“I love a lot of Wes Anderson’s films. I like the pastel, symmetrical feelings, so for me, that was an opportunity to practice other types of photography.”

The last few years have been busy for Interisano and he has recently moved up to Creemore, Ont. where he takes photos of bees, wasps and other insects — meanwhile, still keeping an eye out for coyotes.

To check out more of his photos, check out Interisano’s Instagram @theotterbiography.

For more information about the winning entries in the contest, and the upcoming exhibition, check out the Oct. 9 press release at [rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom](http://rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom).

# Vibrant impressions at Cullis exhibit

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre came alive as visitors gathered to celebrate the opening of Rick Cullis' exhibition on Sunday, which captures the artist's deep appreciation for the town he lives in, its unique landscapes and rich history.

The exhibition, "About Town — My Impressions of NOTL," which opened on Oct. 30, hosted its opening reception on Nov. 3 from 2 to 4 p.m., with Cullis there to share his gratitude for the Pumphouse's support and insight into the inspiration for his paintings.

"I've done a lot of shows. I've helped organize shows, plan shows," he told the crowd of attendees. "Nobody does it better than these folks."

Cullis, who has dedicated over four decades to the art world, spoke about his love for Niagara-on-the-Lake and the inspiration he finds in its picturesque views.

"We've come to learn from walking the town," he said to the audience. "We won the lottery when we



Rick Cullis' exhibit at the Niagara Pumphouse showcases scenes from around Niagara-on-the-Lake. PAIGE SEBURN

came here. This town is just incredible."

During his speech, Cullis shared how he discovers new perspectives while walking, explaining how stepping back from his work allows the shapes to come to life from the blotches of paint he applies — demonstrating how crucial perspective is to his art.

Cullis welcomed questions from the audience, offering insights into his creative processes and the

stories behind his paintings.

In an interview with The Lake Report, he emphasized the personal significance of being an artist in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The unique history and scenic views are unlike those found in any other concrete-filled town, he said.

"I love this town," said Cullis.

He said he's thankful for exhibits like this for showcasing his art to his community.

"It's a collection of work I'm doing that means something to me — and I'm getting other people to be able to see it," he said.

Residents Kelly O'Connor and Christian Medina attended the exhibit and reminisced about their connection to the Pumphouse, where they held their wedding reception years earlier.

They said they enjoy attending openings featuring new artists.

"There are some really beautiful pieces here. We were just talking to one of my mom's friends who's here, and he said the best part is to look at the art and try and picture where it is in Niagara on the Lake," said O'Connor. "We're enjoying that aspect."

This was their first time seeing Cullis's art, and they wouldn't have had the opportunity if the Niagara Pumphouse hadn't showcased it.

"It's always nice to see local artists," said Medina.

O'Connor said such exhibits draw people in to appreciate the artwork but also promote awareness of local artists.

"I always learn something," they both agreed.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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**Autumn leaves and good fun**

Bilal, 6, and Zainab, 3, Bukhari play in leaves at Queen Royal Beach.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Opinion

# The CRA, the B&Bs and thee



**THE TURNER REPORT**

Garth Turner  
Columnist

"Hey, there's another one," I said to Dorothy as we tromped through the crispy leaves. In that one block the score was B&Bs, 6. Residents, 1.

This hunk of the Old Town may not reflect NOTL as a whole, but it sure underscores what we've done with the housing stock. Here, where three million people come to soak in the atmosphere, ride with horses, slurp gelato, hit the theatre and drink too much, investors have learned commercializing homes is big biz.

If you want to have a B&B, this town is your pal. Other places ban the practice of renting out a room or a suite short-term unless you live in the place. Not here. We allow whole houses and cottages, villa and inns to thrive as tourist rentals. But you must register and file a wad of paper, including floor plans, electrical report, insurance proof and a "good neighbour" agreement promising your guests won't pee on Betty's begonias next door.



"Old Ivy Walk" is registered as a "country inn" (currently listed at \$4.4 million) — one of NOTL's 400+ legal bed-and-breakfasts. Another 500 are not, reports Garth Turner.

Currently there are about 415 short-term rentals on file, in total, with the local authorities.

But wait.

On Airbnb alone exist 950 NOTL listings. That's interesting. Hundreds of places seem off-book. Owners would rather make big bucks from visitors than deal with pesky long-term tenants. No wonder renters are scrambling.

Some think Airbnb and other online platforms have helped financialize residential real estate, drive up prices, suck off inventory from first-time buyers and remove those needed for-lease spaces. In fact a little building currently for sale on Queen Street (\$3.3 million) is in the process of converting two apartments from tenants to transients.

"This adds considerable value," the listing agent says.

Well, into this B&B reality pokes the big, voracious proboscis of the CRA.

It's common knowledge B&B revenues must be declared and taxed as income (less allowable expenses). Operating in cash is illegal. The penalties for cheating and being caught include a big fine, interest and a quart of fire ants dumped in your shorts. (Trust me, I know. I was once in charge of the CRA).

Apparently, lots of people are still evading tax.

Here's the latest punishment from the revenueurs — charging HST on the entire sale proceeds when a B&B property changes hands. Seriously. Imagine finding a buyer for the \$1.7 million pile in NOTL that you filled with Airbnb clients for a couple of years, then getting a bill for 13 per cent. Yes, \$221,000. Pay now, please.

This misery flows out of a federal tax court decision a few months ago between a

guy who owned a condo in Ottawa (through a numbered company) and His Majesty the King (never mess with a royal).

It's pretty simple. The condo was an investment property leased out to long-term tenants for nine years. Then the owner flipped over to Airbnb for two years prior to selling it for less than \$600,000. Soon came an HST tab for \$77,079. He appealed. He lost.


The judge ruled short-term rentals are a commercial activity (like a hotel), not residential in nature. The exemption from federal and provincial sales, he pointed out in the law, "does not include a building, or that part of a building, that is a hotel, a motel, an inn, a boarding house, a lodging house or other similar premises ... and all or substantially all of the leases, licences or similar arrangements ... are for periods of less than sixty days."

In short, people who buy houses to go Airbnb are changing the usage from residential (leases) to commercial (tourists). So upon a sale, half the profit is subject to capital gains tax and 100 per cent of the proceeds attract HST. Yikes.

How to avoid it? Get a tenant. And we get a neighbour..

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

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## LETTER OF THE WEEK



Children from the NOTL Public Library's art program have a meet-and-greet with celebrated artist Trisha Romance, whose donations made the program possible. SUPPLIED

### Heartfelt thank you to Trisha Romance

Dear editor:  
Growing up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, my partner and I always found the library to be an important part of our lives.  
Now, it's rewarding to watch our three children — Molly (6), Sophie (9) and Oliver (10) Wiens — experience the value of this space in their own way.  
This weekend, they had the chance to meet Trisha Romance through the children's art program at the library and the impact on them was immediate.  
Meeting a celebrated artist from their hometown gave them a sense of pride that will stay with them for years.  
This incredible program was made possible by Trisha Romance's generous donation to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.  
Her decision to support the library reflects a deep

understanding of legacy — the belief that what we nurture today helps build the future we all share.  
As a board member of the library, I've seen firsthand how donations like hers directly impact the lives of children and the entire community by fostering creativity, confidence and discovery.  
The timing of this initiative during Ontario Public Library Week made it even more special, as it highlighted the vital role libraries play in fostering community connections and a love of learning.  
Trisha's involvement is a wonderful reminder of how meaningful contributions can shape the future and inspire the next generation in lasting ways.  
**Katie Desharnais**  
Board member  
NOTL Public Library

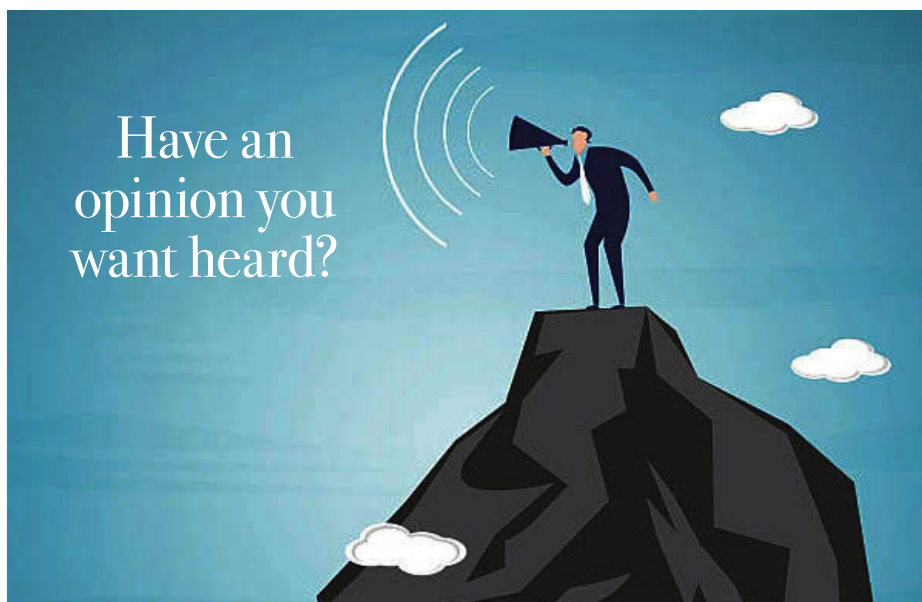
### Locals' needs take second place to tourists

Dear editor:  
When we purchased our first property in NOTL in 1991, relatives and friends all said "Oh, it's such a beautiful little town. We love visiting it. How lucky you are!"  
We had the Niagara Advance sent to our Toronto home so that we could keep up with local news.  
When we finally moved here permanently in 2005, NOTL hadn't really changed much.  
We were used to tourists and welcomed them. In fact, like many others who have chosen to retire here, we felt — year-round — as though we were on holiday.  
Now, many of those same friends and relatives have rather different thoughts

about our town.  
They are reluctant to visit in the summer — too much traffic, an explosion of wineries, Queen Street far too crowded for easy strolling and, as more than one has said, "A Dairy Queen? On main street?"  
Still, some of them continue to come to the Shaw and park in my driveway.  
But what I'm really writing about is how our current council seems to be strongly focusing on expanding tourism, without thinking of those of us who live here and pay taxes to maintain NOTL's services and its beauty.  
We already have several very, very fine hotels, a plethora of B&Bs and VRBOs — more than enough

to accommodate overnight visitors. We now have some really fabulous restaurants.  
And yet, our council has said, "No, that's not enough. Oh, yippee, we're going to get a five-star hotel! Oh goody, let's approve a look-alike Holiday Inn on Queen Street!"  
Those approvals have not taken tax-paying citizens, and especially those who live in close proximity, into consideration. Nor have they considered where and how all those employees are going to park their cars.  
After all, the majority of those future employees will not be living in NOTL, and without public transit, can we expect them to walk or hitch a ride from St. Catharines or Niagara Falls?  
But, I'm mostly concerned with the homeowners whose lives will continue to be disrupted during, and long after, those two hotels are built.  
Traffic and parking, already congested during the summer months and into fall, will be more of a nightmare — for all of us who live in Old Town.  
In fact, when it comes time for me to move, I believe I shall be looking at an alternative to NOTL.  
I'm sorry about that, but it's obvious to me that the majority of our councillors do not care about the well-being of NOTL citizens.  
More and more, tourists are their primary, secondary and tertiary goals.  
**Linda Sauro**  
Old Town

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.



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LLP

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(VAN DE LAAR)  
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# Niven should **reject** council appointment

Dear editor:

From recent letters and comments published in The Lake Report, it is quite obvious that many residents of NOTL are both upset and enraged by the action the present council has taken to fill a vacant council seat.

Despite the claims made by some members of council to the contrary, this action is completely unfair to the NOTL electorate and totally undemocratic.

At the risk of sounding

naive, the only possible way of a return to democracy by this council, as seen by this writer, would be for Mr. Niven to now decline the position offered, even though he has accepted, in the face of obvious public outrage.

This would demonstrate an act of selflessness on his part.

Although the controversy is not any of his making and, as some councillors are quick to point out that

what they have done is within their legal rights (although many people would still consider their actions to be undemocratic), he is quoted as being committed to thoughtful decisions and is presumed to be honest in his thoughtfulness.

This does not appear to be the case with some members of council when an important decision such as this has been made in secret and without any public input.

If he is at all concerned about the controversy surrounding this appointment and the reaction of many residents of NOTL, he should not find this difficult.

After all, he represents nobody but himself and those councillors who gave him their approval and in doing so were, as they have said, within their legal rights.

**Derek Collins**  
**NOTL**

# Town should step up to **find best use** for old hospital

Dear editor:

I read with interest the Letter of the Week “Old hospital needs to be facility for seniors, not another ‘community hub’” published on Oct. 17.

I strongly agree with the Massons’ comments urging the town council to take immediate responsibility for determining the future of this property.

Findings from the senior housing survey, conducted earlier in 2024, highlighted an overarching desire for NOTL seniors to have ac-



Cindy Grant says housing is a prime option for the old hospital on Wellington Street in Old Town. FILE

cess to suitable alternative housing accommodation, within Niagara-on-the-Lake, as an option to assist them through the aging process and ensure that

they can remain in our community.

It is clear that the old hospital site could be one such location.

Importantly, this

element appears to have been excluded from the research addressing a proposed arts, education and heritage hub.

Town council and staff: I strongly urge you to immediately accelerate the process of determining the future of this important town-owned site.

It is a unique opportunity to address an identified need of an important sector of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents.

**Cindy Grant**  
**NOTL**



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# NOTL Remembers those who fought

## What's on in Niagara-on-the-Lake for Remembrance Day 2024

- Remembrance Day service at the Queen Street cenotaph, 10:45 a.m.
- Remembrance Day service at the Queenston War Memorial, 1 p.m.
- Chili lunch at Legion Branch 124 following the Queenston ceremony, free or by donation. All welcome.
- Poppy campaign, running now until Nov. 11, raises funds to support veterans and their families in need. Available at Legion Branch 124 and storefronts around NOTL.
- Youth remembrance contest, multiple branches including visual art, writing and video. More information available for teachers and principals at legion124@gmail.com or 905-468-2353.



## In Flanders Fields

By John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

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## NOTL wins Harvest Classic

With the season underway for the NOTL Minor Hockey Association this fall, the NOTL Harvest Classic hockey tournament took over the Virgil arenas on the weekend. From Oct. 25 to 27, NOTL Wolves players competed against teams from across Ontario. The U18 Rep team came out on top in the Sunday, Oct. 27 championship game, beating the Kawartha Coyotes 3-1. Player Mitch Olsen got the Wolves off to a good start in the game with a first-period goal, followed by two power-play goals from Noah Whyte and Dylan Price. The U13 Rep team also had a good weekend, making it to the semifinals on Sunday before losing 1-0 to the Ilderton Jets, which scored its goal during overtime. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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## NOTL's Michelle Scott leads from experience at national mixed curling championships

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Almost 40 years after playing at the national Canadian mixed curling tournament, NOTL's Michelle Scott is back at the championships.

The 66-year-old made her return at the St. Catharines Golf and Country Club this week, not as a player but as host committee chair for the competition that wraps up Sunday in the Garden City.

Born and raised in curling-crazed rural Alberta, and refining her skills as an adult in Edmonton's world class pool of urban talent, Scott's knowledge of the sport at its best made it easy to accept the role of chair.

"The key was I knew what to expect," said the Chautauqua resident, who played third under legendary skip Randy Ferbey at the 1985 championships in Toronto.

"The planning was really important, but the ability to change on a second's notice was really, really, really critical."

"When you come to a major championship event like this there's a lot of unknowns," she added, noting an instance last week when a player had to be swapped



NOTL resident Melissa Scott, seen here in a recent interview on Cogeco's YourTV, is chair of the 2024 Canadian Mixed Curling Championships. SOURCED

with another at the last minute.

In the end, Scott credits her host committee teammates for making the planning and pivoting so seamless.

She also credits a small army of volunteers who stepped forward to provide invaluable support.

"What's really wonderful about our club is when we made the call out to the volunteers, we didn't have any issues getting the number we needed," she said.

"We actually had to shut it off at one point because we didn't know if we had enough jobs for all the people who wanted to volunteer."

Meanwhile, on the pebbled ice, the 14-team championships featured equally talented people with

the country's best male and female curlers from every province and territory.

Ontario, due to its size and population, regularly fields two teams at championships such as these.

"The quality of the curling is unbelievable because a lot of the players, obviously, have either been here before, played in the provincial championships and been on the national stage," she said.

Plus, unlike some tournaments held in large hockey rinks, she added, fans of these championships benefit from the cozy confines of an actual curling rink.

"Our ice is in great condition and the fans that have come out have really enjoyed seeing and being right with the players."

[wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)

# NOTL's marathoners continue international exploits

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's two prolific marathon runners have continued their exceptional exploits this fall.

Margot Devlin completed the New York City Marathon on Sunday for the 12th time, while John Bobrel ran the Berlin Marathon on Sept. 29, the fifth race in his quest to conquer to world's top six marathons.

For Devlin, the latest New York race is part of the her goal to finish it at least 15 times.

"It was cold and windy and my bronchitis acted up, so I spent the last half coughing. But I made it," the NOTL senior said on Monday.

"So number 12 down and I have already signed up for number 13."

Because, "after 15, I join the New York Road Runners Streakers Club and enjoy the heated tent at the start on Staten Island," she said.

That's where all the elite runners and celebrities gather prior to the Big Apple run.



Left: John Bobrel holds his Berlin Marathon medal and a post-race beverage. DEBBIE WHITEHOUSE



Right: Sport her 2024 New York Marathon jacket, NOTL's Margot Devlin holds her medal from the race. SUPPLIED

Earlier this year, Devlin, who always says she's not fast, just slow and steady, ran her fifth London marathon. She'll be back in England next April for her sixth.

Meanwhile, Bobrel, who finished the Berlin race in 4:05:21, placed 28,269 out of 54,280 total finishers.

"I was 141st out of 666 males aged 65-69. This was my fifth of the six world major marathons," he told The Lake Report.

Bobrel is on a unique journey and hopes to join the exclusive club of runners who have completed the top six long-distance races in the world — each one 26.2

miles (42 kilometres).

It's a rare feat.

With only one more race to go, if he is successful, he'll be eligible for the Six Star Finisher Medal, which is considered one of the most exclusive athletic prizes in the world, according to Canadian Running magazine.

To become part of that club, a runner needs to complete the Boston, New York, Chicago, London, Berlin and Tokyo marathons.

With September's race in Berlin, Bobrel, who travels to the marathons with his wife Debbie Whitehouse, only needs to do the Tokyo race.

He'll get his chance in just a few months.

"I have a bib and package to run Tokyo marathon on March 2, 2025," he told The Lake Report.

"I have started training."

Just this week the organizers of the Six Star Finisher program announced that Sydney, Australia, has been added to the list of eligible marathons.

As well, it's been suggested that Cape Town and Chengdu, China, could soon be added.

It's unclear how the addition of more races will affect the Six Star Finisher program, but organizers said it will remain intact and other awards might be introduced.

Bobrel noted that he is still in the running for a Six Star medal by completing the Tokyo Marathon.

Looking ahead, he hopes to run the Sydney race on Aug. 31, 2025.

"My wife wants to go to Australia," he said.

"I have been, but it is a good reason to run Sydney in the future. I will apply for a package for 2025."

## St. Davids teen takes home rowing gold

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Fifteen-year-old Lauren Deprez is only three years into her journey in rowing and has already struck gold.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake teenager took home two gold medals last week from one of the largest rowing competitions in the world.

The Head of the Schuylkill Regatta located in Philadelphia, Pa. brought out 8,000 athletes and 30,000 spectators to watch the 3,800-metre race.

"It's a really cool course and area, I love Philadelphia— and there was some good competition," Deprez told The Lake Report.

Her gold medals in the women's high school singles and the women's high school doubles come after she ventured into the rowing world when she was around 12 years old, Deprez said.

"My friend told me about a 'learn to row' program, so I joined and I really liked it," she said.

Since starting in the sport, rowing has taken Deprez to many new places, she said.

"We went to Montreal



Lauren Deprez from St. Davids took home two gold medals from the Schuylkill Regatta in Philadelphia on Oct. 28. She also won a third place award in Boston recently. SUPPLIED

in the summer, we have another one in Philadelphia in the spring," Duprez said.

She also took home a third place in the under 17 category at a regatta in Boston recently, mom Jennifer Deprez said.

"Which is a pretty big deal for that weekend," she said.

When prepping for important races like the regatta in Philadelphia, Deprez's secret weapon is her pre-race meal.

"I normally have peanut butter toast and pasta and meatballs the night before," she said.

Deprez, from St. Davids, has been rowing since she first started with the Niagara Falls Rowing Club and also rows with her school, Saint Paul.

High school rowing, which begins in the spring season, also operates out of the Niagara Falls Rowing Club.

When it comes to balanc-

ing work and sports, early mornings are frequent.

"We normally have weights before school, so that's at 5 or 6 a.m., then we'll have practice after," Deprez said.

Jennifer Deprez said rowing is a big commitment, but a good team of parents who are willing to carpool makes a big difference.

Deprez hopes to continue rowing even after high school, she said.

[juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)

The Lake Report

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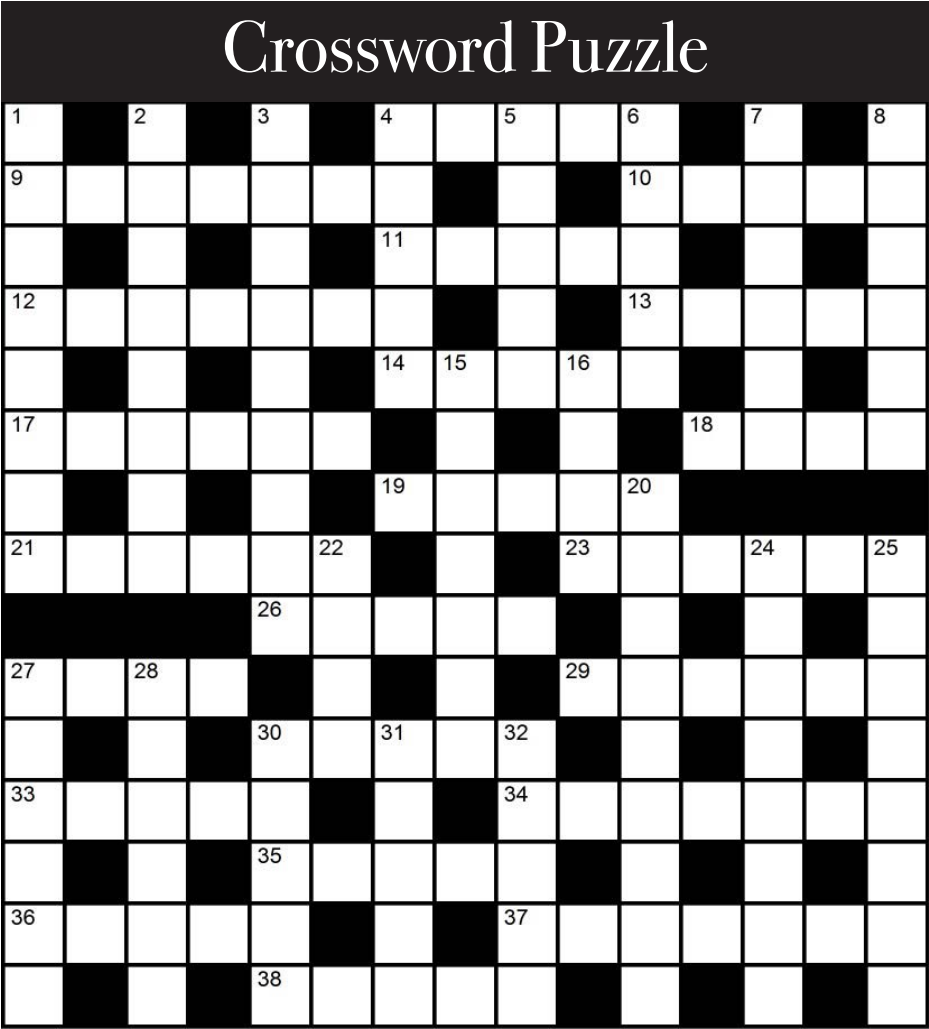


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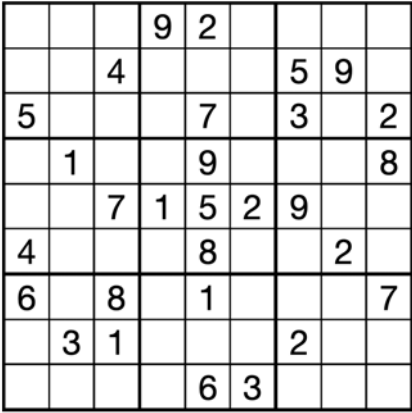
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- Across**
- 4. Thick slices (5)
  - 9. Greyish-fawn (7)
  - 10. Result (5)
  - 11. Efface (5)
  - 12. Recover (7)
  - 13. Path (5)
  - 14. Common people (5)
  - 17. Type of gum (6)
  - 18. Cried (4)
  - 19. Wet (5)
  - 21. Elephant (6)
  - 23. Swiss city (6)
  - 26. Vends (5)
  - 27. Bog (4)
  - 29. Bitter conflict (6)
  - 30. Armed strongholds (5)
  - 33. Thank you (French) (5)
  - 34. Type of bath (7)
  - 35. Cowboy display (5)
  - 36. Metal spikes (5)
  - 37. Diviners (7)
  - 38. Adjusted (5)
- Down**
- 1. Invariable (8)
  - 2. Natives of e.g. Venice (8)
  - 3. Calming medicines (9)
  - 4. Doze (5)
  - 5. Diminish (5)
  - 6. Prophets (5)
  - 7. Guarantee (6)
  - 8. Forsake (6)
  - 15. Notice (7)
  - 16. Stopper (4)
  - 20. 24 hours ago (9)
  - 22. Make over (4)
  - 24. Qualified (8)
  - 25. Purple quartz (8)
  - 27. Instant (6)
  - 28. Vile (6)
  - 30. Being before all others (5)
  - 31. Radioactive gaseous element (5)
  - 32. Offered oneself for election (5)

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Last issue's answers



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# Local support fuels success at annual bazaar

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

As the doors opened for the annual St. Davids-Queenston United Church Bazaar, local Sharon Scruton made her usual rounds, stopping at each table with a smile.

"I like to do a walk-around first, see everything, and then I come back," she said, drawn in by a sign outside.

Scruton decided this was the perfect day to drop in and take in the warmth and camaraderie filling the church hall.

The bazaar, held on Nov. 2 at 1453 York Rd., provided community members the chance to browse tables piled high with homemade crafts, preserves, jewelry, and baked goods, while unique finds awaited them in the Loonie Bin and Attic Treasures sections.

The bazaar aimed to raise funds for church expenses, as well as to support local charities and initiatives.

Susan Cote, a regular at the church, ran one of the tables and was happy to see the turnout.

"The big table is empty — I've sold a ton of stuff," she said.

Cote mentioned she'd created a cookbook and a helpful hints book to help raise funds for the church,



The St. Davids-Queenston United Church Bazaar offered up a variety of goods for people to purchase in support of the church. You could also get a quick lunch. PAIGE SEBURN

and it was selling quickly alongside other items at her stand.

"Things have been going really well," she said.

Church member Karen Horbach said she was thankful for the community's support.

"We're always happy to have the support from the community," said Horbach.

"We're thankful for everyone for coming out today."

Valerie Zuk, a longtime volunteer at the bazaar,

shared her enthusiasm about the day's success, saying the turnout was strong and she cleared out a lot of items from her table, which was nearly empty by the end of the day.

"All this jewelry here? It's all donated," she said, highlighting the variety and sustainability of treasures available.

The bazaar has become a beloved tradition over the past two decades, offering everything from local

treasures to a hot lunch of homemade soup and sandwiches, she said.

Following the bazaar, Zuk said, attendees and those who couldn't make it can look forward to monthly Friday gatherings throughout the winter, featuring beef on a bun, pie, salad, and a friendly game of cards.

The next gathering will be on Nov. 8. Attendees can enjoy all these activities for an admission price of \$13.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU

Finely chop raw, lean meat, add salt, pepper and herbs, top with a raw egg yolk and you're on your way to a dish of beef this.

Last issue:

Category: EUROPEAN VACATION

Clue: In Greece or Cyprus, you might want to try this four-letter liqueur flavoured with anise.

Answer: What is ouzo?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Hamilton, Margie Enns, Claudia Grimwood, Sue Rautenberg, Jeff Lake, Jesse Agnew, Gail Benjaffield, Ken Dewar, Lynda Collet, Wade Durling, Sylvia Wiens, Esther VanGorder, Rob Hutchison, Katie Reimer, Sheila Meloche, Kathy Humphries, Jim Dandy, Alan Brockway, Nancy Rocca, Marjory Walker-Barone, Howard Jones, Lynne Stewart, Mike Gander, Edna Groff, Marla Percy, Tuija Johansson, Hedy Wiebe

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Armistice Day, 1918

Here’s an image of the Armistice Day Parade that flowed down Queen Street on Nov. 11, 1918. The news brought residents and soldiers training at Niagara Camp, mostly Polish soldiers, together to praise the end of the war. It was a feeling of relief and elation that this tumultuous time was over. For the Polish soldiers, it was a time of celebration that Poland was finally liberated after 123 years of occupation. There are women holding a banner that says, “Our Departed Heroes” and the military band can be seen playing music on the right. Although there were celebrations across the country, many soldiers on the front lines were almost stunned with the anti-climatic silence that ensued. Fighting for months or even years had abruptly come to an end which would have been overwhelming. Thoughts quickly turned to coming home, finally seeing family or wondering what to do next with the rest of their lives. After the celebrations quieted down, the home front would soon have to find ways to adapt to the new reality of men returning home with both physical and mental disabilities. From the ultimate sacrifice to lost limbs to survivor’s guilt to shell shock, generations to come would feel the severe aftereffects of the Great War. On Remembrance Day, let’s be thankful to those who did not return but also for those who did and the sacrifices they made to their bodies, their minds and their futures.

# Group from Google Canada visits our town



### Ross’s Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

It’s really not hard to attract tourists to Niagara during the summer months, from late May to early October.

With over 110 million people living within a ten-hour (one-day) drive, we will always attract a healthy number of visitors to our beautiful part of the world.

The wineries, the Shaw Festival, Niagara Jetboat, and oh yes, the world-famous Niagara Falls just on top of the Niagara Escarpment. Only a short drive or bike ride. One of the Great Lakes and a famous river.

Some marketing types tell me the challenge is to extend the time visitors spend with us and to fill rooms in the shoulder seasons and the winter season.

As a veteran of Niagara Falls tourism wars, with the

very popular Oh Canada Eh? Dinner Show, I always admired businesses like White Oaks. They seemed to have full parking lots, and not just during the summer season.

Imagine my happiness last week, on a brisk, sunny and blue sky day. About noon, I was chatting with my good friends, the very active Patty and Bill Garriock, in front of their historic house at the corner of Johnson and Gate streets.

The energetic Patty is a former NOTL Ladies Golf B Flite Champion and contributes regularly to The Lake Report. Bill, replete with worldly and good ideas, occasionally writes a Letter to the Editor of the weekly Lake Report. I wish he would share his business and philosophical bon mots more often.

As we discussed their future living plans, a happy-go-lucky group of about 50 bicycle riders came pedaling and chirping down Johnson Street on Zoom Leisure rental bicycles.

Tour guides Mark Gadet and Martin Harvey called out cheery greetings and their somewhat youthful group members waved enthusiastically.



Ben Visser, the safety conscious manager of Zoom Leisure Bikes, prepares to hand out the mandatory safety helmets.

I noted that they were about 30 or 35 years old on average, from many different parts of the world. I asked a straggler the name of their group, and she happily called out, “Google Canada.”

They all had helmets snugly strapped to their heads. Not most of them. All of them!

Hats (not helmets) off to Steve deBoer and Ben Visser for having six hard-working Zoomers facilitating this complicated group activity.

Yes, great companies spend lots of money developing their employees, with off-site retreats and seminars and team-building get-aways. And great companies set out fair and reasonable rules. Other companies are often afraid to be too strict with their teams.

I imagined that the Google event planning team had told the attendees that for those wanting to enjoy the bike tour option, safety helmets were obligatory.

“We don’t care if you might mess up your hair-

styles. We spend a lot of money developing you and we don’t want you to crack your skull falling off a bike.”

This two-night retreat had been planned for months, and it rolled out seamlessly. Great rooms at the Queen’s Landing and other first-class hotels.

Tours to several area wineries and a guided history tour of Old Town by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum. The mandatory scavenger hunt demanded teamwork, and feigned enthusiasm, and a beer and wine tasting at Cork’s Wine Bar and Eatery.

Even special pricing at the NEOB Lavender shop near the new-and-improved Cenotaph. Greaves Jams and Marmalades happily put extra stock on their rustic shelves, with a fair incentive price.

Still fighting fatigue? How about an early morning 10-kilometre run or jog past Fort George and along the Niagara Parkway Trail for fresh fruit juices at Walker’s Family Market? Optional early morning vespers at the little white church.

There’s also the obligatory Nia Movement class with

Anne outdoors on top of the Fort George moat.

Let’s pause and admire the logistics planning for five full highway motor-coaches, arriving in NOTL for three days of interesting, educational and fun activities.

Event planning takes talent and desire, but the per-person price can be very fair due to the shoulder season timing. The town’s business people win, and the visiting groups win.

In fact, everybody wins. Local employees get more hours of work, our businesses create more revenue without more fixed costs, and the visitors get even better value for money.

Off-season business is where it’s at.

My chats with several young Google sharpies reminded me that to visitors, our town is a fabulous venue for corporate team-building retreats.

Small enough that attendees don’t go their separate ways and get lost. Large enough to satisfy and challenge even the most demanding young folks from Google Canada.

Want to know more about Niagara and NOTL? Google it.



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# Appreciation of the **natural beauty** of Niagara



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

In a bit of a departure from the regular gardening article, this week I would just like to take some time to reflect on how lucky we are to live where we do, in the Niagara region.

Over these past few weeks, we have been engulfed by the beauty of nature. Everywhere you turn, the array of colours has been amazing this year and seems to have lasted maybe a bit longer than usual.

I love going for drives



The Niagara Escarpment presents stunning red colours in fall. JOANNE YOUNG

when I get the chance and never miss an opportunity to capture it on my camera.

It doesn't need to be anywhere in particular. It might be a conservation area, down a country road, or just going for a stroll through

town — there is always something magical to see around each corner.

One of my favourite places to spend time in Niagara, especially in the fall, is along the escarpment, hiking.

There is something about wandering through the tall, towering trees that have faced many adversities and the massive moss-covered rocks that have sat there for millions of years.

The different textures and

shades of bark, highlighted by the large, leathery, maroon-red oak leaves, the golden-yellow beech leaves, the amber-orange autumn colour of the sugar maples and the crimson red of the red maples.

The vineyards are also captivating in the fall with the abundant clusters of ripening fruit waiting patiently to be harvested. The fall colour on the grape leaves can vary from bright yellow to oranges to wine-red, making the fields come alive.

It always amazes me how something like the vineyards and orchards can change so drastically from season to season, each season just as beautiful as the next.

It reminds me that we all go through different seasons in life. Sometimes a certain season can have a negative connotation, but we need to remember all seasons can be beautiful in their own way.

You just need to look for the beauty around you.

Gardens (or nature in general) are something that appeals to people's five senses — sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. This is why being out in nature has such a positive effect on many.

Spending time outdoors can lower blood pressure, reduce stress levels and bring about a sense of peace and belonging to a bigger picture.

Make sure that you take some time outside this week and soak in everything that nature has to give you.

On those sunny, warm days that we just experienced last week, who couldn't help but go for a long walk or bicycle ride down the Niagara Parkway?

The majestic old oak trees that are dotted along the path give you a sense of time gone by.

*Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.*

# Computers — from the early days to modern times



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

In the 1970s, one of my children in public school won a computer with 2k of memory.

It was useless but, then again, it was cheap.

However, as my career as a neurophysiologist progressed, my team became increasingly dependent on computer devices to extract tiny signals from background noise by averaging hundreds of responses, which made event-related signals stand out while unrelated signals cancelled one another out.

Later still, a closely related off-shoot of our group in London, Ont., led by Mark Davis and his new company developed the first computer-based system in the world for analyzing electrophysiological data in the clinic and operating room and was a great success in laboratories like mine for the better part of a decade.

Even so, most computers in the 1980s and 1990s were strictly rules-based.

We knew precisely what we wanted the computer to do and there was no expectation that the computer would do anything other than obey the embedded carefully scripted programs (algorithms of the day) for doing this or that mandated task.

However, change was in the wind with the introduction of what was called machine learning and neural networks by this year's laureates in physics, John Hayfield and Geoffrey Hinton, who modelled their computing devices after the brain.

Single cells in the nervous system integrate signals from a variety of sources, but only when the aggregate signal exceeds a certain level does the neuron respond by generating a signal that it sends to other neurons.

Neurons are also arranged in functionally related groups: Nuclei, layers and/or columns.

Repeated similar signals are strengthened and infrequent signals weakened, a process that underlies memory and signal recognition.

That simple neural model was adopted by Hayfield and Hinton in the 1980s to illustrate how machine learning might work to analyze data.

Still, the fields of machine language, neural networks and deep learning faltered until 2011 and Google.

That year, Google's Brain



Computers have evolved through time and now come in all shapes and sizes for all sorts of purposes. MIDJOURNEY

project was used to extract images from YouTube videos and fed them into a network of 1,000 computers, with a combined total of only one million neurons (nodes).

Crude and underpowered as it was, the project worked and with each passage through successive layers of nodes and networks, more and more defining features began to stand out, until finally, in this case, recognizable faces appeared.

This was the first concrete demonstration of deep learning at work.

Even then, what held the field back was the need for far more computational power, much higher processing speeds and much larger databases on which to learn before challenges such as near-instantaneous translations of language or facial recognition would be possible.

Last year, a series on artificial intelligence was hosted at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, triggered because of enormous public interest in ChatGPT and its various versions.

Whatever the pros and cons of ChatGPT and lookalikes by other companies, machine learning, neural networks and deep learning have been a godsend to scientists.

One example is the challenge of forecasting rapidly evolving weather changes such as hurricanes, flooding events and tornados and on the other end of the time scale, is the challenge of identifying trends and causative factors in long-term climate changes.

Both generate enormous amounts of data that must be analyzed to make sense of the numbers.

That's why modern high-powered machine language-

based computing devices are so essential.

They have the power to crunch the numbers and identify patterns in the data far beyond human computational limitations.

Then, there were the spectacular triumphs in the last few years by Dennis Hassabis and John Jumper for their development of AlphaFold2 and David Baker's similar RoseTTAFold, both designed to unravel the mystery of how linear strings of amino acids fold into 3D molecules to do whatever their particular job is in biology.

The three men shared the Nobel Prize in chemistry this year in what was a triumph of integrating basic physics, chemistry and computer science.

Finally, to close, some of my readers may have followed in this newspaper the struggle of patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis to express themselves.

One of the triumphs of machine language is its ability to extract relevant signals — in this case, signals in the brain's neocortex related to the choice of words and articulating those words when the related systems have been affected by the disease.

The signals are recorded from the appropriate regions of the brain but mixed with a myriad of other signals — making it all but impossible

to make sense of what's going on without much-updated versions of machine language.

Only a few years ago the best that could be hoped for was 10 words a minute with an error rate of 30 percent and a vocabulary of about 100 words.

The latest version has a vocabulary of thousands of words, at least 30 to 50 words a minute and an error rate of less than five per cent.

That's real progress and not because of improvements in the electrode array, but because of the latest programs, which learn to cull the brain's electrical signals for those essential for choosing the right words quickly and precisely — in so doing — restoring working speech to someone who has lost it.

That's only one example of the transformative power of AI and machine language.

The physics and chemistry Nobel Prizes this year are a tribute to the five scientists who helped to develop the tools that underlie AI and the subject of the annual series on the prizes beginning with physics on Nov. 6 at 2 p.m. in the NOTL library. Please sign up with Debbie Krause.

*Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.*

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